

Thank You for Smoking discussion questions

Evaluate each of the following actions/actors. To what degree were they ethical?

1. Nick Naylor, spokesman for the Academy for Tobacco Studies.

When Nick's company needs an initiative to promote smoking as "cool," Nick immediately turns to Hollywood, feeling it can bring the "sex back into cigarettes." He makes plans with an agent to have cigarettes placed in an upcoming movie that will feature the main character smoking to create a positive role model for smoking (a technique known as product placement).

Was it ethical for Nick Naylor to try to place cigarettes in movies to help make them seem "cool" to help cigarette sales?

If a tobacco company knows that its product is harmful, is it their responsibility to acknowledge that harm? Advertise it? Warn their consumers? Is it immoral to promote the pleasures of smoking when there is a great deal of evidence that indicates that smoking is harmful to your health? Should the advertising of cigarettes be banned?

Nick's job was a lobbyist, but how would you describe what he did for a living? Was he a defender of the right to choose or a professional deceiver and liar?

Do corporations and industries need defending, like a man who has been arrested for a crime needs defending?

In the general sense, is it ethical to work for a company to help it promote a product that is as unhealthy as cigarettes?

Is Nick a moral man?

2. Reporter Heather Holloway

She keeps up a relationship with Nick Naylor to get information from him that otherwise would have been inaccessible. She may not have lied to him outright but did deceive him and he only found out once he saw the article in print. Was her approach to writing this article ethical?

3. The Marlboro Man

The Marlboro man didn't want to take the money from the tobacco company but after Naylor showed him how he could keep it and save face (by not telling the media), he took it. Naylor also showed the Marlboro man how if he told the media, he wouldn't be able to keep the money and save face. Everybody would know he accepted a bribe and judge his actions as immoral. The payoff worked and Marlboro Man was happy.

Was it ethical for Naylor to convince the Marlboro Man to take the money even though it wasn't necessarily a bribe? Was it ethical for the Marlboro man to take the money?

4. Senator Finnestre

Senator Finnestre's mission in this movie is to go after tobacco companies. His words and tactics are often manipulative. He chastises his aide for not getting a better "cancer boy" to go on a TV show.

Is it morally justifiable to exaggerate the risks and twist the truth in order to protect people from doing something dangerous (e.g. to dissuade people from smoking or taking drugs)?

Was the Senator a hypocrite?

5. Misc.

Are the vigilantes that attack Nick morally justified in their actions?

Is it normal and acceptable to engage in unethical business practices in order to pursue private moral goods, such as supporting your family?

Can you think of other public issues where paternalistic concerns come into conflict with individual rights? What is your stance on this/these issues and why?